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ABSTRACT

The impact of state reform initiatives on Kentucky public schools is described in this paper, with attention to financial and facility repercussions. State legislative action in 1985 established class size limitations and new certification programs, which necessitated reorganization of the middle schools. Following the Kentucky Supreme Court's 1990 decision that mandated the development of financial equity for public schools, the Kentucky Reform Act had a major impact on school governance and funding regulations. Compounding the situation was the failure of the state legislature and department of education to conduct adequate needs assessments and cost analyses prior to passage of each reform mandate. The demand for new facilities and funds generated strains on the public schools related to new construction, building approvals, and restructuring of the tax base. (LMI)

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CHANGE: IMPACT OF REFORM IN KENTUCKY

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A paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Conference of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration in Los Angeles, California, August 12-17, 1990.

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CHANGE: IMPACT OF REFORM IN KENTUCKY

Reform and restructuring has made a major impact on education in the United States in recent years from changing curriculum mandates, achievement requirements for students, faculty, and administration to the concepts of grade levels for the school structure. These reforms have been especially true in Kentucky. Most recently, the Kentucky Supreme Court declared many components of education statutes unconstitutional. These changes have made major repercussions on school facilities and factors which relate to new construction, financing strategies, and building approvals.

Emphasis will be on the factors which have impacted school facilities in Kentucky: new construction to address middle school needs based on the reform of certification requirements for elementary K-4, middle school 5-8, and secondary schools 9-12; the unconstitutional decision of the Kentucky Supreme Court on education; education reform from this decision by the Kentucky General Assembly and the impact these have on building approvals, financing, and restructuring of the tax base.

With changes in certification of teachers and principals, school districts were expected to reform the school districts by furnishing schools with the K-4, 5-8, and 9-12 grade levels. This effect generated financial and facility repercussions which could not be easily addressed. The demand for new facilities and for funds to finance these facilities were greater than the ability for the state and school districts to adapt.

Since these mandates, the decision by the Kentucky Supreme

Court and the response by the Kentucky General Assembly for reform and restructuring has created additional strains on school facilities which relate to new construction and financing. The statutes currently being passed by the legislature will have a definite impact on school facilities especially with the concept of the principal's council for decision making concerning all aspects of education in a school.

The impact of reform in Kentucky has initiated change in many aspects of school facilities. The demands for effective utilization, new construction, finance, and council decision making are a scant number of the reverberations on school facilities in Kentucky.

Reform in 1985

Educational reform begin in Kentucky with the Extraordinary Session of the Kentucky General Assembly in summer of 1985. The legislative action established class size caps. The caps on class size was welcomed by the majority of the educational population when these actions were first announced. Unfortunately, the Kentucky General Assembly had failed to perform a statewide facilities assessment or cost analysis to determine the need to carry out the mandate on class size. Needs were based on a district-by-district survey [Lane & Prickett, 1990]. School districts were mandated to implement the caps on class size with limited funds from the state. The impact of this legislation eventually indicated a shortage of classrooms and facilities. Many school districts were required to have split

classes, use gyms, stages, closets, storage facilities, and cafetoriums to meet the new mandates.

To address this facet of the extraordinary session of the general assembly, many districts were required to increase local taxes for new construction. Though research indicates small class size does result insignificantly higher student achievement scores [Achilles, Bain, & Finn, 1990], a recent study by Lane and Prickett [1990] evidenced that state legislatures did not provide the funding necessary to address caps on class sizes. More important, Kentucky as well as other states has failed to conduct an effective assessment to determine the impact of legislation for educational reform on facilities and finances of the local school district.

The 1985, legislative session also mandated new certification and accreditation programs providing for grade levels to be K - 4 for early elementary schools, 5 - 8 for middle schools, and 9 - 12 for secondary or high schools. The emphasis for this action came from the concepts for middle schools and effective schools research. The majority of school districts in Kentucky had schools in the district arranged by grades on a K - 8 for elementary schools and 9 - 12 for secondary schools. To address these new concepts, many school districts requested assistance from the state department of education to build facilities and renovate existing facilities to provide for the new grade alignments. Again the state had failed to assess the needs of facilities and financing to implement legislative

mandates.

Four years after the legislative mandates for middle schools, a survey of thirty school districts in the Morehead State University's service region indicated that twenty-eight of the districts had new construction in progress or on the planning board. Forty-three facilities were under construction or being planned with fifteen or thirty-five percent being middle schools. Of the other facilities planned or under construction, eighteen or forty-two percent of the new facilities were being constructed to allow an existing facility to become a middle school. Seven districts indicated that funding was based on a local effort because the state did not consider the facilities need of the district to be on the priority list. A phone interview with a state department official indicated a shortfall of four hundred million dollars to meet the requests for facilities construction and renovation in Kentucky.

Reform 1990

A lawsuit against the Kentucky Department of Education and the Kentucky General Assembly concerning equitable financing of the public schools generated a Kentucky Supreme Court decision declaring the majority of components of education statutes to be unconstitutional. The decision mandated the Kentucky General Assembly to immediately enact new legislation to develop financial equity and an efficient educational system [John A. Rose; Donald J. Blandford v. The Council for Better Education, Inc., 1989]. The Kentucky General Assembly responded in the

1990, session with the Kentucky Educational Reform Act of 1990 [KERA 90]. This reform has many facets which are to be implemented over the next six years. The components which will impact facilities and finances of school districts are:

1. A curriculum on seven student capacities including communication skills, understanding of governmental processes, knowledge of mental and physical wellness, and skills to compete.
2. School councils to implement school-based decision making.
3. Early childhood education programs including half-day pre-school programs and pre-school for handicapped children.
4. Family resource/youth service centers.
5. Use of technology including telephones in every classroom and a classroom computer networked with the state department system for attendance purposes and records of students.
6. New funding regulations and formulas.

Regarding the new curriculum, educators, schools and school districts will be assessed based on outcomes-based performance of students. The new curriculum concepts which are currently being developed and must be implemented by July 1, 1996, may require new facilities or renovation of current facilities. Students are expected to acquire the following capacities:

1. Communication skills necessary to function in a complex and changing civilization;

2. Knowledge to make economic, social, and political choices;
3. Understanding of governmental processes as they affect the community, the state, and the nation;
4. Sufficient self-knowledge and knowledge of his mental and physical wellness;
5. Sufficient grounding in the arts to enable each student to appreciate his or her cultural and historical heritage;
6. Sufficient preparation to choose and pursue his life's work intelligently; and
7. Skills to enable him to compete favorably with students in other states [KERA 90; HB 940: 1-2].

At this time the actual needs for facilities to address the new mandated curriculum for the public schools is unknown. Funding was limited to develop and implement the new concepts but is not indicated in the finance bill to provide for facilities if there is a need.

The major impact of the reform act is a change in the governance of the schools. School districts are to implement the school-based decision making principles--school councils. The statute mandates that by 1996, all schools will be governed by a school council which is composed of the principal, three teachers elected by their peers, and two parents elected by a parent group or PTA/PTO. The school council has been given eight areas to govern. One of the areas is the assignment and utilization of the school facility or use of the school space during the educational day. It is anticipated with the actions of the school council there will be an increased request for additional space for educational purposes. The school council is charged to provide the environment and activities to allow children to perform to the highest level of achievement.

The school board of the district and the superintendent are charged to maintain facilities and provide the funds necessary for capital outlays. The school council may only make requests of the district board of education. All new facilities, construction, and renovations must be approved by the Kentucky School Facilities Construction Commission.

KERA 90 requires early childhood education programs including half-day pre-school programs for four-year old children and pre-school for handicapped children. Again the legislature mandated programs without a needs assessment of facilities for implementing the statutes. School districts are currently evaluating the alternatives to implement this program by fall of 1990. Secondary schools [high schools] are to also provide day-care centers for children of students by the beginning of the 1990-1991 academic year. Most districts do not have adequate facilities to accommodate these programs.

By June 30, 1992, school districts are to have implemented in at least one-fourth of the schools that qualify, family resource and youth service centers in the school or adjacent to the school. These centers are to provide health and social services to the students.

The Kentucky General Assembly mandated technological improvements in all educational facilities. A plan is to be developed and computers are to be placed in every classroom for attendance purposes and record keeping, tracking students and student records, and networking opportunities for educators. The

estimated costs of acquiring the hardware and software is forty-four million dollars. For the 1990-1991 fiscal year, two hundred thousand dollars has been allocated.

In addition to computers, every classroom is to be equipped with a telephone for teacher use. Estimated costs does not include the factors of facility and electrical renovations for implacement of the technological components.

The main emphasis for the reform includes new funding regulations and formulas for education. As mandated in the Kentucky Supreme Court decision, the legislature required the development of new taxation for funding education. For facilities the new funding formula is "Facilities Support Program of Kentucky" [F.S.P.K.]. The calculations are

1. Maximum eligibility of per pupil ADA x .0005
2. Less the required local effort per pupil district assessment x .0005 which provides the
3. State per pupil matching funds
4. State per pupil x District ADA = State Dollars

Currently, many superintendents and school officials are trying to learn the impact these facets will have on the income for facilities.

As identified in the research by Lane and Prickett [1990], legislatures and departments of education fail to properly assess the needs of schools and districts for adequate facilities and funding for these facilities prior to mandates and statutes requiring new programs. Kentucky is no exception as many new

programs and new moneys are available, but there has not been a concentrated effort to address the impact of the reform act on facilities.

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